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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000267

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR G/TIP, DRL AND EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: PROSECUTOR GENERAL LAUNCHES INVESTIGATION OF
TRAFFICKING COMPLICITY ALLEGATIONS

REF: 05 YEREVAN 257

(U) Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) On February 17, Prosecutor General Aghvan Hovsepyan created a commission to investigate allegations against his employees including the investigator of his Anti-Trafficking Unit, Aristakes Yeremyan (see paragraph 6). In a meeting with the DCM, Hovsepyan was notably upset about Armenia's Interim TIP Assessment released February 1 and expressed his determination to address these allegations so they would stop overshadowing his office's significant work in combating human trafficking. The commission includes members outside of the Prosecutor's office and works in close collaboration with Edik Baghdasaryan, the president of the Association of Investigative Journalists (AIJ), whose publications contained the first public allegations of Yeremyan's complicity in trafficking (reftel). End Summary.

PROSECUTOR GENERAL LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS

2. (SBU) Hovsepyan's initial reaction to the interim report was either to remove Yeremyan from the Prosecutor's Anti-TIP unit or to fire him altogether. Realizing, however, that the removal or dismissal of Yeremyan from his post without any legal basis other than the allegations in the media would not restore public trust in the activities of the Prosecutor's office, Hovsepyan pledged to establish an ad hoc commission, which would look into the allegations against the Prosecutor's office.

PG CREATES COMMISSION

3. (SBU) Hovsepyan created this ad hoc investigatory commission in mid-February. Its members include three staffers from the Prosecutor's office, one person from the Prime Minister's Oversight Commission and a member from the National Assembly's Audit Chamber. According to Prosecutor Boshnaghyan (who works in the Prosecutor's Anti-TIP unit), the commission is currently looking through all media publications containing allegations against the Prosecutor's Office, after which it will start verifying this information. The Association of Investigative Journalists is the author of these media publications, and Edik Baghdasaryan confirmed that the commission members have been in close contact with him in recent days requesting these articles, which Baghdasaryan has forwarded to them along with some of his interviews.

AIJ APPROACH UNCLEAR

4. (SBU) Edik Baghdasaryan told us he has not yet decided how he should cooperate with the commission. While he has told us that he would share concrete facts with them, we believe he is unlikely to reveal his sources (many of whom are trafficking victims) because he is concerned about their safety. According to Baghdasaryan, he would formulate his final approach to the activities of the Commission only after he had seen their preliminary findings.

COMMENT

15. (SBU) We welcome the Prosecutor General's decision to establish a commission involving people outside of the Prosecutor's office to conduct an investigation of allegations made against his subordinates. This investigation has the potential for GOAM to clear its record on this matter and start focusing on its increasing, and increasingly successful, efforts to fight human trafficking.

TEXT OF THE PROSECUTOR GENERAL'S DECREE

16. (SBU) The Prosecutor General's office provided us with a copy of the decree establishing the special commission. An informal embassy translation follows.
Begin Text:

February 17, 2006
Decree on Establishing a Task Force

Using the publications of certain mass media means, in particularly the publications of the "Association of Investigative Journalists" public organization as a source, it has been mentioned the possible involvement in trafficking of officials of RA Law Enforcement Bodies, including the Prosecutor's office and the Border Guards Service, which has been included in the US State Department's 2004 Annual and 2005 interim reports on Trafficking.

In order to check these circumstances and based on Article 11, point 2 of the RA Law on Procuracy, I order:

To create a task force consisting of the following persons:

1. Minasyan Mihran - Head of the Department against Corruption of the RA Prosecutor General's Office /head of the task force/
2. Avetisyan Gagik - Head of the Organizational-Oversight Department of the RA Prosecutor General's Office
3. Stepanyan Hovhhanes - Senior Adviser to the RA Prosecutor General
4. Gasparyan Gegham - Deputy Chairman of the National Assembly Chamber of Control / upon agreement/
5. Sedrakyan Ashot - Deputy Head of the Oversight Service of the RA Prime Minister / upon agreement/

Present the results of the checks to me:

State Counselor of Justice
/s/
Aghvan Hovsepyan

End Text.
EVANS